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Book Reviews

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BOOK REVIEWS

MODERN TRIALS. By Melvin M. Belli. Indianapolis, Ind.: Bobbs Merrill, Abridged Ed., 1963. Pp. 953, \$15.00.

Those of us who work in the field of advocacy have become increasingly discouraged by the reluctance of law schools to teach courses in trial strategy, procedures, and techniques. Despite the constantly repeated statement that trial lawyers are born, the trial arts can be taught to a large degree and their importance to the practicing bar is increasing constantly. Therefore, we feel more can and should be done by our law schools to prepare students to practice in this area.

One reason for this lack may have been the dearth of text materials suitable for such courses. If so, Mr. Belli's latest book may help to resolve this problem. Its scope is broad, ranging from the evaluation of the raw case, its investigation and preparation, basic theories of presentation, pleading, settlement, and trial.

One of the phases in which the book excels is in the treatment of "demonstrative evidence," with which the author's name is constantly identified. Over three hundred pages are utilized for a comprehensive discussion of the various aspects of this subject, including the use of exhibits on appeal. The volume contains over a hundred illustrations, ranging from anatomical studies, X-rays, and photographs of physical injury to scale models, diagrams, and photographs of physical objects important to the establishment of liability.

The question may be asked as to whether or not the book is slanted in any way. That it is, without question. Mr. Belli's concern quite clearly is for the injured plaintiff. One will find in this book suggestions as to how to bring suit and how to establish liability—even how to enjoin the defense from harassing the plaintiff. One will find no suggestions to defense counsel as to how to defeat an unmeritorious case. Yet, even then, this work will have substantial value to those engaged primarily in defense work, since the trial arts are fundamentally the same on both sides of the case. There is no question but that the author is a brilliant, albeit controversial, exponent of civil advocacy. The text material, drawn as it is from hundreds of civil trials of the author's and of other able counsel, contains important suggestions drawn from the techniques of many advocates who have helped to create new and interesting approaches in the trial field. The medical glossary and bibliography alone should find extensive use by book purchasers.

This is a better written book than the three volume work *Modern Trials* by the same author. The water has been "squeezed out" it contains the more essential portions of the multivolume work, it is updated, and the style flows smoothly and interestingly. It would be a better book if the author deleted such discussions as that upon page 243 debating the comparative merits

of soliciting the execution of a release versus ambulance chasing. Such comments are not worthy of a book of this caliber.

However, these details are minor flaws which one may tolerate as constituting a relatively immaterial portion of the text treatment. They do not destroy the value of the bulk of the work. I recommend its purchase not only as a teaching aid but by lawyers, seasoned and unseasoned, in the trial field. We can all profit by it.

JOHN ALAN APPLEMAN